

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 0668

LIMDIS

GUATEMALA FOR ROGERS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MX, SNAR, CASC

SUBJECT: APPOINTMENT WITH NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY

REF: STATE 9921

1. I SPENT A PLEASANT HALF HOUR WITH NEW FOREIGN SECRETARY ALFONSO GARCIA ROBLES LAST EVENING. I SPOKE ALONG THE LINES OF REFTEL, EMPHASIZING THE STRENGTH AND GOOD HEALTH OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. GARCIA ROBLES SAID HE KNEW THIS FULL WELL FROM HIS PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE MINISTRY AND FROM HIS EXPERIENCE AS MEXICO'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS. HE HAD ALWAYS WORKED CLOSELY AND CORDIALLY WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVES. HIS PRINCIPAL POINT OF REFERENCE WAS DISARMAMENT AND EVEN ON THOSE POINTS ON WHICH U.S. DELEGATES COULD NOT SUPPORT MEXICO WITH A POSITIVE VOTE, THEY HAD ALWAYS DONE THEIR BEST TO SEEK AN AGREED POSITION AND AFTERWARD HAD COLLABORATED FULLY ON WHATEVER HAD BEEN DECIDED. WITH SOMETHING OF A CHUCKLE HE REFERRED TO THE FACT THAT IN THE ECONOMIC FIELDS IT WAS A CASE OF "FLOUR
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FROM ANOTHER SACK" AS TEMPERS WERE APT TO RUN HIGH ON BOTH

SIDES SINCE ECONOMISTS, UNLIKE THE DAYS OF OLD WHEN THEY WERE APT TO BE DRY, SCHOLARLY, STATISTICAL AND BORING WERE NOW EXTREMELY COMBATIVE. I POINTED OUT THAT EVEN IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD WE ARE COLLABORATING CLOSELY WITH MEXICO. I MENTIONED SWAP AGREEMENT AND PROSPECTS ON GSP.

2. WE SPOKE OF THE JOINT NARCOTICS EFFORT AND GARCIA ROBLES POINTED TO THE OTHER EVENING'S SESSION AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF OUR MUTUAL COLLABORATION. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION OF THE FACT THAT HE AND I PERSONALLY, THANKS TO OUR RESPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND, HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN WORKING OUT THE MUTUALLY AGREEABLE WORDING. I TOLD HIM OF OUR EMBARRASSMENT AT THE LEAKS IN THAT MORNING'S EDITION OF EXCELSIOR REGARDING "USE OF STAEELLITES" (NOT NOW IN PROSPECT) AND NUMBERS OF DEA AGENTS AND REGRETTED EMBARRASSMENT TO GOM AND ESPECIALLY TO PRESIDENT AND TO ATTORNEY GENERAL.

3. CONVERSATION ON NARCOTICS LED IN A NATURAL MANNER TO DISCUSSION OF PRISONER ISSUE. HE ASKED WHERE OUR PRINCIPAL COMPLAINTS LAY, AND I TOLD HIM OF THE MATTER OF NOTIFICATION AND ACCESS, INTERROGATION PRACTICES, AND FINALLY PRISON TREATMENT. I EXPANDED ON EACH OF THESE THEMES, POINTING OUT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD A DIRECT INVOLVEMENT, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO FULFILLMENT OF THE CONSULAR CONVENTION. I EMPHASIZED THAT IMMEDIATE ACCESS WAS THE BEST REMEDY BOTH AGAINST ABUSES DURING INTERROGATION AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS IN THIS REGARD. I TOLD HIM THAT WHILE FALSE ALLEGATIONS WERE NATURALLY TO BE EXPECTED, THE REPEATED ALLEGATIONS COMING FROM ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY THAT ELECTRICAL INSTRUMENTS WERE USED DURING INTERROGATION LED US, UNFORTUNATELY, TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WAS AT LEAST IN SOME INSTANCES TRUE. I POINTED OUT HOW CONTRARY THAT WAS TO EVERYTHING THAT PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA REPRESENTED IN THE WORLD AND POINTED OUT THAT IMMEDIATE ACCESS WAS THE BEST PROTECTION

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AS IT WAS PRECISELY BETWEEN ARREST AND ACTUAL COMMITMENT TO A FORMAL PRISON THAT ABUSES WERE ALLEGED OR APT TO TAKE PLACE. THE SECRETARY SAID THAT HE QUITE AGREED WITH ME AND SAID HE WAS SURE THE PRESIDENT WOULD ALSO. WE AGREED TO MEET FOR CONSTANT VIGILANCE ON ISSUE OF ACCESS. GARCIA ROBLES RECALLED THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT REMARKS THAT HE WISHED LECUMBERRI COULD BE TORN DOWN IMMEDIATELY AND IN ANY CASE IT WAS TO BE REPLACED WITH MODERN PRISONS

IN A FEW MONTHS. I TOLD HIM THAT IN THE MEANTIME, WE HOPED THAT PRISON CONDITIONS COULD BE IMPROVED. WE HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT MEXICAN PRISON PRACTICES WERE IN SOME CASES MORE HUMANE THAN IN THE U.S. BUT IN SOME CASES MEDIAEVAL CONDITIONS EXISTED OR THE PRISONERS WERE, SADLY ENOUGH, REGARDED AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INCOME FOR THEIR JAILORS.

4. THE SECRETARY WAS SYMPATHETIC AND INTERESTED AND AGREED WITH MY PROPOSAL THAT WHEN WE HAD SOME SPECIFIC CASES WE MIGHT GO INTO MATTER IN MORE DEPTH. COMMENT: WE SHOULD NOT KID OURSELVES, HOWEVER, INTO THINKING THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE PRISONER FIELD IS ANYTHING OTHER THAN A TRANSMISSION BELT, AND A VERY SLOW AND WEAK ONE AT THAT, FOR COMPLAINTS OR REPRESENTATIONS WE MIGHT MAKE. EXCEPT IN REGARD TO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONSULAR CONVENTION, IT IS IN SOME WAYS THE MOST REMOVED OF ALL THE MINISTRIES FROM WHAT IS GOING ON IN MEXICO. END COMMENT.

5. I ALSO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS CONVERSATION TO MENTION THE ILLEGAL ALIEN PROBLEMS AND TO TELL HIM OF THE VERY GREAT EFFORTS THAT WERE BEING MADE JOINTLY TO INSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF THE UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS WERE BEING PROTECTED AND THAT MEXICAN CONSULAR OFFICERS NOW EVEN HAD OFFICES IN THE DETENTION CENTERS(SOMEDAY I HOPE(TO BE CALLED REPATRIATION CENTERS)SOMEDAY I HOPE).

6. MY IMPRESSION OF GARCIA ROBLES WAS THAT OF A PRECISE, SOMEWHAT DRY, BUT COURTEOUS GENTLEMAN. HE IS AN EXPERT IN MEXICO'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND UNDER THE RATHER POLISHED EXTERIOR I UNDERSTAND HAS A WILL OF IRON AND A STEADFAST DETERMINATION TO GET THINGS DONE.
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HE IS REGARDED WITH GREAT RESPECT BY HIS SUBORDINATES. THOUGH OUR RELATIONS WITH HIM MIGHT BE LESS FREE AND EASY THAN THEY WERE WITH RABASA, IN THE LONG RUN IT MAY BE EASIER TO WORK WITH HIM BECAUSE OF HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROBLEMS, HIS SKILL AND LONG EXPERIENCE IN DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES AND THE RESPECT WITH WHICH HE IS HELD AT HOME. I NOTICED THAT EVEN THE PRESIDENT THE OTHER NIGHT AT LOS PINOS TREATED HIM WITH CERTAIN DEFERENCE. THIS MAY BE BECAUSE HE IS THE NEWEST MAN ON THE TEAM OR IT MAY BE BECAUSE EVEN ECHEVERRIA REGARDS HIM AS A STATESMAN.
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